



Washington Weekly

April 3, 2007



U. S. Congresswoman
CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK

13TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN

This e-newsletter summarizes events taking place in the U. S. Congress that affect the State of Michigan, with particular emphasis on Michigan's 13th Congressional District. A printable version of this e-newsletter will also be available on my website: www.house.gov/kilpatrick.

Hill Highlights

Legislative Action for the Week Ending 03/16/07

Congresswoman Kilpatrick understands that trust in government begins with citizen access to information, increased public disclosure of those that fund the political process, and greater protections for those who work to improve how taxpayer dollars are spent. This week, she supported several bills designed to restore accountability in government and provide greater transparency of how the government operates.

Whistleblowers have played a critical role in exposing government and corporate waste, fraud, and abuse. Whistleblowers have also helped protect the health and safety of Americans by revealing failures in the prescription drug approval process and airline safety vulnerabilities. **H. R. 985, the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act**, strengthens protections for federal employees who report waste, abuse, fraud, or mismanagement to authorities. This measure gives whistleblower protection to federal workers specializing in national security issues, and improves protection for employees of federal contractors who report on waste fraud and abuses of taxpayers dollars. It also protects employees who report on the federal government manipulating of science. Congresswoman Kilpatrick supported this measure, which passed the House by a vote of 331 to 94.

Recent hearings and investigations reveal waste, fraud, and abuse in government contracting. U.S. contractors have wasted an estimated \$10 billion in Iraq Reconstruction spending because of overcharging, poor tracking, and mismanagement. About 19 Katrina contracts worth a total of \$8.75 billion have been plagued by waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement; only 30% of the more than \$10 billion in Katrina contracts were awarded with full and open competition. **H. R. 1362, the Accountability in Contracting Act**, seeks to protect taxpayers' money by reforming the acquisition practices of the federal government. The bill instructs agencies to minimize the use of no-bid contracts, promote the use of cost effective fixed-price contracts, and limit the duration of no-bid contracts awarded in emergencies to one year. It requires that agencies disclose their rationale for using no-bid contracts and to report overcharges on contracts to Congress. The measure also closes the revolving door between government procurement officials and private contractors. The Congresswoman voted for this bill, which passed by a vote of 347 to 73.

The 1966 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is the landmark law that opened the government's records to public scrutiny so that government is more accountable to the public and the press for its performance. Because of FOIA, Vietnam veterans learned about their exposure to Agent Orange. More recently, reporters learned that the military had given U.S. troops in Iraq body armor that failed ballistics tests, and the American public learned that the Pentagon lacks a comprehensive plan to identify and treat tens of thousands of troops who may suffer from traumatic brain injury, the signature injury of the Iraq War. However, government responses to FOIA requests are slowing, and backlogs and delays are increasing. **H. R. 1309, the Timely Public Disclosure of Government Documents/FOIA Reform Act**, changes the previous law to provide more timely disclosure of government documents. This bill restores the presumption of disclosure to FOIA, helps FOIA requesters obtain timely responses, improves transparency in agency compliance with FOIA, provides an alternative to litigation, and provides accountability for FOIA decisions. Congresswoman Kilpatrick supported this measure, which passed by a vote of 308 to 117.

H. R. 1254, the Presidential Library Donations Act, requires the disclosure of donors who contribute over \$200 to presidential libraries during a President's term and the four years after the President's term ends. Currently, there is no limit to the amount donors can contribute; donations also do not have to be disclosed. Secret fundraising efforts of

years after the President's term ends. Currently, there is no limit to the amount donors can contribute; donations also do not have to be disclosed. Secret fundraising efforts of unlimited contributions create significant opportunities for abuse, particularly as fundraising can begin while the President is still in office. The Congresswoman supported this bill, which passed by a vote of 390 to 34.

H. R. 1255, the Presidential Records Disclosure Act, restores public access to the official papers of former Presidents. This nullifies a 2001 Presidential executive order that gave current and former Presidents—and their heirs—and former Vice Presidents broad authority to withhold presidential documents or delay their release indefinitely. Congresswoman Kilpatrick voted in support of this legislation, which passed the House by a vote of 333 to 93.

To read more about these measures or any other legislation, please visit the Library of Congress' legislative information site at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

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[Michigan's 13th Congressional District Home Page](#)



News You Can Use

Congresswoman Kilpatrick Featured in New Exhibit, "Women of the CBC"

Congresswoman Kilpatrick is featured in a new exhibit called "Women of the Congressional Black Caucus." The exhibit celebrates the contributions African American women have made to Congress. It also emphasizes their efforts to create legislation aimed at improving healthcare and highlights their participation in activities designed to address disparities and promote healthy living. To view the exhibit, visit www.avoiceline.org.



Congresswoman Kilpatrick participates in a press conference at Henry Ford Health System.

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